

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY RANGOON

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AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 235626

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, BM

SUBJECT: BURMESE FOREIGN MINISTER'S CALL ON UNDER SEC SISCO

1. BURMESE FOREIGN MINISTER U HLA PHONE MADE A 15-MINUTE COURTESY CALL ON UNDER SECRETARY FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS SISCO ON FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18. THE BURMESE AMBASSADOR ACCOMPANIED HIM. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY HUMMEL PARTICIPATED IN THE DISCUSSION.

2. THE FOREIGN MINISTER BEGAN THE DISCUSSION BY SAYING THAT HE APPRECIATED HAVING THIS OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A BRIEF COURTESY CALL AT A TIME WHEN HE KNEW THE UNDER SECRETARY
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WAS VERY BUSY, SISCO WARMLY GREETED HIM, NOTED THAT HE TOO

MUST BE BUSY AS HEAD OF HIS COUNTRY'S DELEGATION TO THE UN. SISCO ASKED WHAT THE FOREIGN MINISTER THOUGHT ABOUT THE KHMER ISSUE. BEFORE HE COULD REPLY, THE BURMESE AMBASSADOR RESPONDED QUICKLY SAYING THAT HIS "INSTRUCTIONS WERE TO ABSTAIN AND SINCE THESE HAD NOT BEEN CHANGED HE WOULD VOTE AS SUCH ON THE ISSUE." IN A DISARMING WAY, THE FOREIGN MINISTER THEN EXPLAINED THAT BURMA HAD DECIDED TO REMAIN NEUTRAL UNTIL A MORE CONCILIATORY SITUATION HAD DEVELOPED. THE UNDER SECRETARY SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THIS TRADITIONAL POSITION, BUT THOUGHT THAT BURMA AND OTHER SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS WOULD BE PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN NOT SEEING THE PRECEDENT ESTABLISHED OF A NON-RESIDENT CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT BEING RECOGNIZED BY THE U.N. THE FOREIGN MINISTER

SMILINGLY REASSERTED THAT BURMA STILL INTENDED TO REMAIN NEUTRAL, WHILE THE AMBASSADOR REPEATED THAT HIS INSTRUCTIONS WERE TO ABSTAIN. (COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE FOREIGN MINISTER ACKNOWLEDGED WHAT HIS AMBASSADOR WAS SAYING, WE HAD THE DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT THE AMBASSADOR WAS TAKING HIS INSTRUCTIONS FROM SOMEBODY ELSE.)

3. SISCO THEN REFERRED TO REPORTS ABOUT BURMA'S ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES. THE FOREIGN MINISTER USED THIS OPENING AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO THANK THE USG FOR THE EMERGENCY FLOOD RELIEF RECENTLY SUPPLIED BURMA. HE SAID THAT ABOUT 500,000 ACRES OF PADDY LAND WERE DESTROYED BY THE FLOODS, AND THE AMBASSADOR ADDED THAT SOME 700,000 HEAD OF CATTLE WERE LOST.

4. SISCO ALSO ASKED ABOUT THE IMPACT OF THE INCREASED OIL PRICES ON THE BURMESE ECONOMY. THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID THAT BURMA WAS PRACTICALLY SELF-SUFFICIENT, ALTHOUGH IT WAS PURCHASING SOME OIL FROM INDONESIA WHICH AMOUNT TO ABOUT 20 PERCENT OF BURMA'S TOTAL CONSUMPTION NEEDS. HE REMARKED THAT HE WAS VERY HOPEFUL THAT THE CURRENT OFFSHORE OIL EXPLORATIONS, WITH DRILLING DUE TO GET UNDERWAY BY EXXON THIS NOVEMBER-DECEMBER, WOULD MAKE BURMA COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT OF OUTSIDE HELP.

5. SISCO TURNED TO BURMA'S MORE ACTIVE RELATIONSHIPS
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WITH THE COUNTRIES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA, NOTING THAT RECENTLY THERE HAD BEEN SEVERAL EXCHANGES OF GOODWILL MISSIONS AND MINISTERIAL VISITS. THE FOREIGN MINISTER AGREED THAT THIS HAD BEEN OCCURRING, PARTICULARLY IN THE AREAS OF INCREASING CULTURAL AND TRADE CONTACTS. IN RESPONSE TO A SPECIFIC QUESTION FROM HUMMEL, THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID BURMA'S RELATIONS WITH THAILAND WERE "MUCH BETTER" THAN THEY WERE EVEN A YEAR AGO. HE ACKNOWLEDGED, HOWEVER,

THAT WHILE OFFICIAL TRADE HAD NOT INCREASED, SMUGGLING
ACROSS THE THAI-BURMA BORDER STILL TOOK PLACE ON AN
INTENSIVE SCALE. MR. HUMMEL SAID THAT THIS INCLUDED
NARCOTICS, TO WHICH THE FOREIGN MINISTER NODDED AGREEMENT.
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